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IN THE HIGH HILLS



MAXWELL STRUTHERS BURT



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IN THE HIGH HILLS

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BY

MAXWELL STRUTHERS BURT

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IN THE HIGH HILLS

THE MACHINE

ONCE in a dreary place where women die,
I watched a work-worn spirit leave the clay,
And as the breath came quick, in grotesque way,
Her fingers thumbed the air, and one foot high
Pressed up and down the coverlet awry.
The pale nurse nodded; "Every hour each day,
So in the mills, poor soul, she earned her pay.
I wonder will she like the open sky?"
O woman form, that God hath made divine,
So cunningly contrived of blood and flesh and breath,
That you should spin your soul away in twine,
And at the end card wool with waiting Death!
Will such as you within the silent tomb,
Find only this, a respite from the loom?

MYSTERY

MINE ears have caught some melody of winds,
Some far-off echo of the flutes of dawn,
Stirring, all tremulous, the leafy blinds,
With faint gold music, dying and withdrawn.

Mine eyes have seen the sun, for mile on mile,
Touch with a torch of rose the mountain ways;
And watched at dusk down darkening forest aisles
The quiet mysterious going of the days.

And, O, my heart was glad as dawn that I,
Out of my ignorance could find unfurled
A splendid signal flung across the sky
And sense a hidden music in the world.

REST

THE hills call, the dew-glad morning hills,
Above the dust and fever of the plain;
Could I lay aside my yoke of old-time weariness;
Could I take my staff and seek the hills again;
The far hills where dawn is sweet with rain.

After much thirst, much hungering at nightfall,
When the long way beyond my striving seems,
Would there come suddenly the keen, sweet breath of
valleys,
And, afar off, the sound of twilight streams,
In quiet hills where dusk is cool with dreams?

The murmuring of rivers and the wind,
A starlit place of shadows, liquid, deep;
Ah, and a night of infinite forgetting,
Night of the calm great hills that vigil keep;
The mother hills where weary men find sleep.

THE HILL-VALLEYS

IN the hill-valleys, the cool valleys, valleys that I
know,

You can sit all day with flowers at the edge of the
snow,

Sit all day with flowers and let your soul possess
The round open quiet and a great gentleness.

In the hill-valleys, the still valleys, valleys that I love,
You can watch the clouds a-sailing in the blue sky
above:

Watch the clouds a-sailing, and then come down at
night

To your dear love waiting and your own home light.

THE HILL-BORN

You who are born of the hills,
Hill-bred, lover of hills,
Though the world may not treat you aright,
Though your soul be aweary with ills:
This will you know above other men,
In the hills you will find your peace again.

You who were nursed on the heights,
Hill-bred, lover of skies,
Though your love and your hope and your heart,
Though your trust be hurt till it dies:
This will you know above other men,
In the hills you will find your faith again.

You who are brave from the winds,
Hill-bred, lover of winds,

Though the God whom you know seems dim,
Seems lost in a mist that blinds:
This will you know above other men,
In the hills you will find your God again.

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SONG

YOU'RE as lovely as a dawn of winds
Over the high hills calling:
Flush of gold as the last star fades,
Sound of waters falling;
Here are flowers on the dew-wet green
And the throbbing note of a bird unseen!

Break o' the day, the dawn is yours,
And the hush and the stir and the singing;
The poignant scent of a cañon rose
A small warm wind is bringing:
And, O, the stir of me, lift of me, thrill,
As the first light renders fine the hill!

Hush o' the night, when the stars are free
And the wind brings word of the river;

Answering word from the listening dark
Where haunted aspens quiver:
Yours is the heart of those who pray
In the passionate, silent forest way.

THE HARVEST

I WILL arise now and go into the fields, to my love who
is at work.

Dusk droops from the mountain-tops like the shadow
of a great bird's wing:

In gray corrals the cattle call;

And in the grass, where all the tangled perfumes of the
summer lie, the crickets sing.

From afar off I will see him leaning upon his rake,

And the lithe sweet strength of him will stir my heart

As a bird stirs in a twilight brake,

Stirs and quivers and throbs into a song.

Ah, my dear love, how close I find you now,

Where peace is and the quiet of the hills.

IN THE HIGH HILLS

God has lent the wind to you,
Swept the great sweet mind of you
Keen and clean and splendid as the noon on peaks
agleam.

Peace of sunny, hidden hollows
Down whose slope the long light follows,
And the hush is musical with dripping mountain
stream.

God has lent his coolness, too;
Wet green woods and bramble-dew;
Scent of quivering aspen leaves still joyous from rain;
Ah, if one were burned with sorrow,
Sleep would come until to-morrow
From a dream of cool fine hands to bless with peace
the pain.

Noon among the high white hills;

Evening where the forest thrills,

Magical with moonlight, the scented ambient hush:

Things like these are part of you,

Soul and mind and heart of you:

Winds and storms and sunny days and sparkling,

dawn-wet brush.

DROUGHT

DAY in, day out, dust devils dance
Along the ridge. The cattle die
Stark mad by leperous water-pools.
Day in, day out, in wicked trance
A white sun sears in twain the sky.
And we who know so much are fools,
And god is dead — and you, away:
You in the north and I so parched —
Day after day, day after day.

Night after night, the red moons creep,
Like lizards in the purple heat,
Across the dead hills to the east.
Night after night, I cannot sleep

For memory of wind showers fleet

And the cool sweetness of your breast.

When, when will there come the good wet rain,

Peace, and you in my arms again!

DAWN

ALL night the wind wove evil in the hills,
The great ghost-witches of the dusk drove on,
Till suddenly there fell a hush, a peace,
And Christ walked clear-eyed, radiant through the
dawn.

AMENDS

If I were blind,
Nor never knew the sweet green glory of the Spring,
Still could I hear at dawn the lark,
Thrush song at dusk, and stir of wing:
Ah, who could be disconsolate
When left so many a lovely thing!

If I were dumb,
And on mine ear fell lovéd melodies in vain,
Could I not see the splendid sun
And taste the cool of summer rain:
And in my heart be memories
That silence stirs to song again!

If I were dead,
Then what were left? Would you not coming o'er me
weep;

And kneeling by my narrow bed,
All night a wide-eyed silence keep: —
What then could man ask more of God
Than this — your love and sleep?

COLIN FORTUNATUS

COLIN once a shepherd boy,
Lithe and sweet and hobbledehoy,
Crowned with leaves that a chance hand chooses
From a bank of dew-wet roses;
Early, early morning singing,
Up the fields like a bright bird winging;
And over the hills in the wake of dawn,
The cool shrill notes of a piping faun.

O, to lie in the grass with Pan —
Large, goat-heeled, delightful man!
Hear, like wind in a forest walking,
The silver murmur of his talking.
All at once the flowers are brighter,
All at once the blue is lighter,

All at once you find that over
Your head, the bees talk in the clover —
Till, a sudden shower of rain,
His laughter dies down the golden grain.

Gone! In market-place and forum,
Where the elders meet in quorum,
You're a great man, Colin, now,
Portly shank and bent of brow.
Argosies from Lydian waters
Bring rich spoil to deck your daughters,
And your good wife takes a pride
In her mantle Tyrian dyed.

Gold, for all the gold of sunrise!
Tyrian dress for purple dawn skies!
And for faun pipes sweet and bitter,
Laggard feast and servile titter;
What would you give to be a man?
Once more in the grass with goat-heeled Pan,

AND THE WOMEN PRAYED

DEAR Lord, who loveth passing well
Thine own beloved Son,
What do they win, these little prayers,
That seek Thee one by one:
These little prayers that find Thy feet
Like doves whose flight is done?

The little prayer of Mary Rose
Who pleads on worn knee
That Thou keep safe from cruel things
Her pretty lad at sea:
The little prayer of this pale one,
Before the candles seven,
Begging Thee guard till she be there
Her little child in Heaven.

What do they win, these little prayers,
That seek Thee one by one;
Dear Lord, who loveth passing well
Thine own beloved Son?

GIFTS

PRINCETON — 1912

THREE things would I bring to you,
Bring as a man to his mother returning;
A heart that is young despite the years;
The same old unfulfilled yearning;
And all in all, let be what would,
The keen, swift faith that God is good.

For these things do I owe to you,
Taught me once when I was a boy;
And only the poor in heart forget
In graver times what they knew in joy,
Or think since their own small world is sad,
That the heart of the world is aught but glad.

Love of towers I learned from you,
Skyward held like hopes of men;
Love of bells across the fields
Heard at dusk intoned — and then
Just the way a yellow light
Fell from a window in the night.

Moon-white hours I learned from you,
Small warm winds the elm scent bringing;
Evenings when the Spring was held
By young voices old songs singing;
And by dusk and dawn and day
Gentleness from buildings gray.

These I learned, and love of the sun,
Open fields and windy weather,
Work, and striving for the fun,
So that hearts are brave, together;
More — the faith, if faithful you,
Sometime, somewhere dreams come true.

The world is a world of truth, I know,
And man must live by the truth, or die;
But truth is neither a poor dried thing
Nor a strumpet, tawdry gorgeous lie;
But just the fact, that by doing and giving,
Young dreams come true while a man is living.

So I would bring three gifts to you,
Got from you by loving and learning;
A heart that is young despite the years;
The same old unfulfilléd yearning;
And all in all, let be what would,
The keen, swift faith that God is good.

THE STREET OF THE MANY LITTLE LOVERS

THE gaunt gray street goes up the hill, over the hill
and down,

At night it lies a scar of light across the pallid town
And Jezebel meets Dives there, Madonna walks with
clown.

All day the paths are troublous with those who sell and
buy,

All day the air is murmurous, till dusk droops from the
sky,

Then passing strange the quiet change where the
whispering shadows lie.

For like a brood of timid moth, black-winged and
white of face,
From hidden door and byway forth, the lovers of the
place
Flit two by two their stale day through, to win an hour
of grace.

With red, cruel lips that stab the dark, pale Circe
plies her trade.

Lust of the night is swift and stark, but youth walks
unafraid,

Strolling there, with virginal air, young lovers in the
shade.

Pale little lovers, drab and dim, beneath the white
lights' glare;

Man in the travesty of Him and girl of stupid stare;
Yet all the dusk is tremulous with inarticulate
prayer.

Aye, up and up the prayers arise, on fetid breezes
blown,

Up to the utter naked skies where a great star swings
alone,

And small desires build flickering fires before the
darkling throne.

Whisper adown the languid air that stirs the sick,
stale heat,

Where love walks cannot walk despair, though love
has leaden feet,

For above the light is the quiet night where his wings
are wont to beat.

“We would not know the ways, O Lord, of wonder and
desire.

What could we make of still, sweet days, or nights of
rose and fire?

Dawn and the dew are meant for few, for the poor,
dead flowers in the mire.”

“A little surcease now and then, fuel and clothes and
bread,
Children, that we may rest us when the palsy nods
our head,
And in the end enough to spend on a coffin for our
dead.”

Drab-souled, who scarcely know ye pray, far less the
grave import,
Ye cannot feel beyond a day, you poor of man's
disport!
Yet every soul, I take, seeks dole of joy in some small
sort.

Shadows that drift across the night, woof and warp
and loom,
Be glad of even briefest light in the crowded street of
doom;
Would ye fill for aye with your loves the way in a world
that is scant for room?

The gaunt gray street goes up the hill, over the hill and
down,

At night it lies a scar of light across the restless town,
But love walks there with weary eyes and mud-
bedraggled gown.

THE WATCHERS ON THE ROAD

THE hill road, the desert road,
The road down to the ford:
At each one stands an angel
With a white and terrible sword,
And through the day and through the
 dark
They watch in the name of the Lord.

Stark as the heat of burning noon
The brooding in their eyes;
The swords they bear are keener far
Than wind-whipped, sun-swept skies;
And the stirring of their wings is such
As when a great tree dies.

The crickets in the grass give pause
When the great swords ring;
The leopards hark of a star-still night,
The eagle rests on the wing:
And only the little folk go by
Nor know the wondrous thing.

Only the little folk who crowd
The roads as they travel by,
With their laden wains of foolish gear,
To the town against the sky;
And they never know, the little folk,
That the watch of the Lord is nigh.

Perchance at night a lonely one,
Or one who drinketh late,
Senses the glimmer of a sword,
Or the stir of the wings of fate,
And a moment his eyes are troubled
As he fumbles at his gate.

But save for this, the road so filled,
They look not left nor right,
Lest by day their hearts be dazzled,
Lest they lose their way by night,
And a gleam they see, they write it down,
As star or street-lamp light.

Once on a time, there came a man,
With the fine heart of the seer,
And straight he beheld the watchers
And cried that the Lord was near: —
But the little folk, they blinded him,
And cast him out for fear.

The desert road is hot and cruel,
Hard is the road to the ford,
And at each one stands an angel
With a white and terrible sword.

THE FLUTE-PLAYER

THERE comes a day when April's in and Spring walks
down the city street,
And barrel organs, everywhere,
Make songs for little children's feet;
And, O, the chestnut trees are sweet!
The crocus blossoms in the square —
'Till suddenly as breath o' pain you catch the flute
notes here and there:
A single note! Another higher!
Up to the gray cathedral spire!
Elusive as a skylark winging:
And the heart of you goes out in singing.

Just a moment, and they are still; but all the hours are
gay with light;
The stars creep out in purple skies

And yellow lanterns jewel the night
Where hansoms flit to left and right
Like huge enamored fireflies.

Young voices stir the lilac dusk with murmur, laugh-
ter, fall and rise;

And once again, where the shade lies thick,
You hear the flute notes, cool and quick!
A silver call — a demi-quaver,
The shyest, happiest, quaintest flavor!

They say that oftentime in June, when roses deck the
quickset hedge,

A lover and his lass will note
Far off, beside the river's edge,
Amidst the purple-irised sedge,
The glimmer of a pyed gold coat,

And on their ears a fluting fall as soft as from a black
bird's throat;

Then he will think her fair as flowers,
May dawn, June rivers, August showers;

And both young hearts will set a-beating
As on the eve of their first meeting.

And once I saw, when Winter blew the sun behind a
saffron sky,
From out the shadow of a thorn
The twinkle of a watching eye —
Outrageous humorous and sly —
Above a gold coat gay and torn;
And heard within, without, beyond; — a pipe, a bird,
a flute, a horn;
A singing underneath the snow —
How could I tell, my heart beat so?
But that was when from oversea
My dear love had come home to me.

Once, long ago, the story runs, a rich man tried to
catch the fellow;
He set a feast out on the grass,
And piled the cloth with sovereigns yellow,

And wine of vintage extra mellow;
But no one ever came, alas!
So evening fell and moth-winged night, and dawn,
when little swallows pass:
There grew a knocking at his gate,
“Be quick! Your brother dieth straight!”
And this is strange but past refuting,
Beside the dead, he heard the fluting!

Ah, none can ever capture him, nor over here, nor over
there,

He comes when only so he wills,
And answers never a single prayer
Of beggarman or Rajah's heir.
Till one fine day his music thrills,
When least expected, over the hills:
“Over the hills and far away!
We'll find the dawn,” the flute notes say;
But, ah, should one set out to follow,
They die in the echoes down the hollow.

THE DESERT

OUT of the dark I called to you; out of the enfolding
dark you came;

And your coming was a light above far hills, when,
star by star, the evening breaks to flame.

A small wind stirred the hush that held the night; I
felt the heat-wan desert flowers rejoice;
And suddenly in hidden cañon clear, the laughter of a
river's singing voice.

O, swift your heart as desert wind at eve; and swift as
desert wind the feet of you;
And your cool hands are twilight after sun, when sago
lilies lift their cups for dew.

Fierce and cool, and fierce again the hours, dusk after
blue and silence after light;
And, sudden as the stopping of a heart, the fall of
night.

I could not know the mystery of you, silver as tall
white lilies in the sand;
I could not know you, fierce and cool and sweet, were
not the desert here on either hand.

Love in the crowd is laughter heard far off; a dream of
following one beloved, forlorn,
On a long road that never knows an end, where weary
night awakes to weary morn.

But here we are a woman and a man, stark, splendid,
honest, stript of shame;
So that our love burns bright and fierce as fire, when
no wind stirs the flame.

And I will kiss you in the hour of toil, when all our
blood is sweet as sun-warmed wine;
And I will kiss you when the dark is come, folding us
close, your throbbing breast on mine.

Cling to my lips, the desert night is here! Cling to my
lips, the desert night is still!
And only the wind that walks by dusk is over us, and
God's grave will.

THE MARCHING FEET

DRUMS, drums, drums to the fore!
The rattle of drums and the tramp of feet:
Throbbing drums and pulsing beat,
Hurrying drums and hurrying feet,
Like the gathering winds of a storm.
O, men of the army of marching feet,
O, ye who came when your country cried,
Your footsteps haunt each lane, each street,
Your blood still makes the meadows sweet,
And the uplands where ye died!
I have heard ye marching in noonday heat,
Through country roads where the dust turns gray
The hanging boughs of the trees that meet
Overhead, and far away,
I have heard, as ye pass at night along
The still white lanes, your bugle-song.

Stern young faces and brave set lips,
Lips firm set with the vows ye swore,
Ye knocked with joyous shining eyes
As lovers knock at a garden door
And plucked the flower of sacrifice,
The blood-red rose of war.
Still to your lips the blossoms bend,
Nor careless time can crush the eternal flowers,
Nor rend from you the quiet, waiting hours
Of snows and suns and stars and showers,
Till the last muster call startles the hills.
But we? — aye, what of us?
Have we forgot the star-touched, echoing past in this
so brief a day?

Dull-souled forgot in lesser strife
The rapt young visions held more dear than life?
Hearing no more beneath the noises of the street
The quiet passing of your feet?

Yea, ye are gone, ye men of sterner race,
Ye youths that met death face to face and triumphéd,
No more the hills reëcho to your tread,
No more on uplands bloom the flowers red;
And we your sons and childrens' sons
Answer no more the restless calling of the guns,
Nor stir within our sleep for visions,
Gone is the quickening young desire for splendid
things,
The dreams that break and quiver into fire,
On Summer nights when earth is tremulant with un-
seen wings.
What plea is ours down the long courts of unrelenting
time?
That it were right? That visions, old, unfit, outworn,
Have served their making and must not be borne,
A chaff of burdens on our giant destiny?
For we are free;
Free, great, and strong,

To dare new Gods with casual, irreverent song,
And build our temples in the market-place of wrong.
No longer need to make the haunted wilderness a
home,
And "but a little path to God," the seas:
No longer need to bid men turn with awkward plough
the loam
And cry, "Here sow I, Lord, with simple psalteries
In faith and honest deeds
The strong clean pregnant seeds
Of this Thy swelling harvest yet to come."
Yea, we are fat and grown white with pride!
No need of prayer; nor any need of sowing?
For the splendor loved by Babylon,
For the purpled pride of Tyre,
We have worked and we have won,
Is the strife, then, through and done?
Shall we take our ease like potentates
Nor heed the altar's fire?

For the riches that were Nineveh's,
For the wares of Ascalon,
For the high-piled heaps of rotting myrrhs,
Shall we pawn our destiny for theirs?
Shall the earth shake, quick with chariots,
As our Gods, brute Gods, drive on?
No need of dreams? We, who are born of seers?
We who are very children of a dream?
My heart stirs within me like a drum
And I hear far off the marching of a host.

Attend, O Lord of Visions, to our prayer!

May we know pain, O God, may we know pain,
And pave with blood and tears our way
Along the old forgotten path again
To find the sweet strength of a younger day.

Lo, Thou hast given us a land more dear
Than that Thou promised to him of old,

And we have made of it a drear
Parched place of tongues and bartering gold.

Yea, we are strong, full strong and great,
And in our hands we hold the sword of might,
But gone, O Lord, the dream to build our fate
A beacon flame and signal through the night.

Yea, gone are all the hopes that kept us young,
The visions, Thine, of unfulfilled desires,
And in decaying temples, far outflung,
Thy priests watch lonely by the dying fires.

O God, may we know pain, may we know pain,
And find with tears and blood the path again!

Do we forget?
Forget so utterly?
Nay, it is not so!

Only, for moments does it seem
That we have lost the splendor of our dream.
We know, had we but time to heed, or hush the busy
 whisperings of greed,
That stirring, pulsing, throbbing, slow,
Implacable would rise the tread
Of the stern ever-marching army of the dead.
We — we are still the visioned great-souled breed!
Not like the older nations from decay,
Not wearily we sin,
But heedless, reckless, children at play,
Straying, we have a little lost our way,
Nor see as yet the darkness folding in:
Aye — for in the end, sore torn and bruised, we,
Like long-lost children, will return to Thee;
Like coast-born children weary for the sea.
And then: —
Ah, then once more his joy who seeing dim

Through clinging mists, dear land, thy wave-swept
shores,

Knew in that moment, resting on his oars,
That thou mean'st peace and dreams to him:
And then: —

Ah, then once more the sword-like keen delight
Of good green shores and sun-swept, wind warm day,
When that gay band and grave adventurous knight
Dropt ready anchor in the welcome bay.

O land, dear land, how sweet thou wert to look upon!

Behind, behind us lay the weary leagues of sea,

For God had led us through the waters

Through the perils of the waters,

Through the calling, raging waters,

God had led us forth to thee.

And the rose bloomed in the covers,

There where the out shore sprung,

With the silence brooding over,

A balm to the weary rover,

While the rivers sang like lovers
When the heart of the world is young.

Then the hills called, bidding us seek further,
Blue with the Summer's waning fire,
"Ye must go! Ye must go! For ye grow! For ye
grow!

And beyond us lies the land of your desire."

So we followed;

The forest aisles grew murmurous with our tread;

On the hills we built our altars,

In the valleys laid our dead;

Before our silent moccasins the haunted silence fled.

Beyond, still, still beyond, lay the summoning sea of
leaves,

To the quiet folk who followed fell the garnering of
our sheaves.

Could we watch with patient eyes

Red-gold sunsets paint the skies?

Could we hear the call unminding
Of an empire for our finding?
North and South and West we trailed
Where the wild geese honking sailed;
Where the aloe blossoms paled
In the living, silent sands;
Where the leaping waters sang,
And the hills with music rang;
In our eyes the wide dim distance,
On our cheeks the smoke-blown dust,
In our hearts the haunting summons,
“Build ye must! Aye, build ye must!”
And our cursing was but praying to a God who under-
stands,
And our sweat was goodly incense with the worship of
our hands.

So we dreamed and prayed and builded for the
future.

O beautiful army of those who live;
O shining host of those unborn;
Into your hands the dead years give
The battle standards stained and torn,
Save where aloft unfading gleams
The starlike glory of old dreams.

Hark! Can ye hear above the hum, the clang'rous
 hum,
The calling of a drum —
The far-off calling of a drum!

THE FOUR WINDS

THE four winds blow across the sky:
(Wind and rain and sunny weather!)
The brave fine winds, how they hurry by:
(Mirth and sorrow and death together!)

Wind of the East, with your mystery,
(Shreds of rain and a fog-swept fell —)
You bring me news of the great grave sea,
And the cry of gulls and the sound of a bell.
Wind of the South, would you whisper by!
Dusk and rose and a rising moon;
Hark! And the haunting, echoing cry
Of a water bird on a white lagoon.

Wind of the North, blow, blow again!
Keen and splendid and steel and blue,

Lands of silence and men and pain,
Strong are the joys men find through you.
Wind of the West, ah, wind of the West!
Sunset mesa and far Cathay:
(Vanishing sail on the ocean's breast,
And the warm, sweet dust of a desert day.)
Only we who have known you best
Know the heart of the things you say.

The four winds blow across the sky:
(Wind and rain and sunny weather!)
The brave fine winds, how they hurry by!
(Love and life and death together!)

THE CITY OF DESPAIR

DAWN comes not:

And I have waited:

Watched through the tired hours of the night,
Alone, upon the house tops, arms outstretched,
Prayed for the first faint trembling joy of light.

And all the dawns rise hid in somber hue,
Behind black chimneys thrusting up like spears
Into the murk, from where above I view
The sodden sleeping citadel of tears.

Tears! If only that were so,
Some little cheer for you and me to keep;
But now so old our wrong, so dumb our woe,
That we have even lost the will to weep.

I knew a girl in this same sordid street
Who sold her soul, the only thing she had,
Not for a rose, a smile, but bread to eat;
A little maid, Madonna-like and sad.

And all the ways are filled with passing men,
Like Christ until you look into their eyes;
Ah, there is naught of Godhood in them then,
But such a thing that hope of hoping dies.

God! I must have wide skies and hills that surge and
sweep,
Rest from the stark grim town of evil dreams,
White clouds that sail like galleons in the deep,
And peace, at dusk, by murmuring mountain streams.

Somewhere I know are dreaming lawns at eve,
Song of a thrush, as hidden water, sweet,
Low laughter, singing — one could scarce believe
That lovers tryst in this gray, dreadful street.

And sometime truly Spring will come again,
For I, more fortunate, have watched her glide
Over the hills where violets drink cool rain —
But, ah, that little maid, Madonna-eyed.

And dawn comes not:

And I have waited:

Watched, weary, through the hours of the night;
For all the day is hid and stilled with fears
Above the sodden citadel of tears.

VIA CRUCIS

OUT of the dark we come, nor know
Into what outer dark we go.
Wings sweep across the stars at night,
Sweep and are lost in flight,
And down the star-strewn windy lanes the sky
Is empty as before the wings went by.
We dare not lift our eyes, lest we should see
The utter quiet of eternity;
So, in the end, we come to this:
Christ-Mary's kiss.

We cannot brook the wide sun's might,
We are alone and chilled by night;
We stand, atremble and afraid,
Upon the small worlds we have made;

Fearful, lest all our poor control
Should turn and tear us to the soul;
Adread, lest we should be denied
The price we hold our ragged pride;
So in the end we cast these by
For a gaunt cross against the sky.

To those who question is the fine reward
Of the brave heart who fights with broken sword
In the dark night against an unseen enemy;
There is not any hope of victory.
While sweat is sweet and earthly ways and toil,
The touch of shoulders, scent of new-turned soil,
Striving itself amid the thrusting throng,
And love that comes with white hands strong;
But on itself the long path turns again,
To find at length the hill of pain.

Such only do we know and see;
Starlight and evening mystery,

Sunlight on peaks and dust-red plain,
Thunder and the quick breath of rain,
Stirring of fields and all the lovely things
That season after season brings;
Young dawn and quiet night
And the earth's might.
But all our wisdom and our wisdom's plan
End in the lonely figure of a Man.

ROMANCE

I

You were made of dew and light;
You were made of sun and sky;
Near a thyme-delightful height,
When the clouds were riding high
And the mists were all unfurled
In the morning of the world.

On a temple-pearléd hill
Where the bees wove drowsy hum,
You lay and dreamed your fill
Of the ages yet to come.
And a sly Pan crept and peered;
And a sly Pan wept and feared;
For he knew no age could hold
You forever in its fold

Till time with centuries fraught
Found the lover that you sought.

II

You were made of storm and rains;
You were made of mist and spray;
Out of bitter striving pains
In the battle-haunted gray,
Where the fir and sea-scud meet
At the northern ocean's feet.

In the shadow of an oak
When the winds were holding mirth,
Life came to you and spoke
Of a sorrow-gladdened earth;
For a Viking found you fair,
For a Viking kissed you there;
And, though glory swept your face,
Yet you fled from his embrace,

Trembling, wept within the wood;
Pale with thought of motherhood.

III

You were made from breath of fern,
From the spell of mossgrown shades,
'Neath a crystal lily's urn,
In the mystic silver glades,
Where, between the beech tree boles,
Trod the deer on velvet soles.

Near a still enchanted pool —
Threads of sunlight webbed your hair —
You lay and drank the cool
Of the flower-haunted air;
And a knight came riding by;
And a knight remained to sigh;
For your beauty made him love
You, whose heart no man could move.

So he sang full mournfully
Of "La Belle Dame Sans Merci."

IV

You were made of springtime nights;
Of the dear earth-smelling winds;
Of perfumes and delights
That stir mysterious blinds,
In that wonder-working hour
When first blooms the crocus-flower.

By a window dark you knelt
Where the night wind stirred your hair,
And the breathing presence felt
Of a love that waited there.
And I groped and found you, sweet,
And I kissed your hands and feet,
Till your heart, awaiting me,
From the mist-dim ages free
Leapt — at my broken cry —

O life! O woman! It is I!

THE QUIET WAYS

THE Great God made me a man,
Red blood, quick heart, keen eyes;
And he set me here in his wonder world
Under his spreading skies:
Dawns gray-red, and rose rose-red,
And at night the star mist over my head.

The little ways are narrow,
The little ways are mean;
And I cannot see the blue sky,
For the high walls between;
I cannot see the blue sky,
Nor the faces brown and lean.

There is no good denying it,
If you be mountain-born,

You hear the high hills calling
Like the echo of a horn;
Like the echo of a silver horn that threads the crowded
day,
You hear the high hills calling and your heart goes
away.

There is naught that I count as gain
In the stolid dykes of stuff;
A heart that is free to sing at eve,
I count that gain enough;
And a single furrow of new-turned sod,
A man's gift to a Man God.

To build you a house by a stream;
To sing you a splendid song;
To love a woman whose heart is flame;
To work and dream and be strong;
To sow new fields to the edge of the lane
In seeds that leap to yellow grain.

The white-faced people, they pass me by,
With their sneer, their leer, and their stain; —
That Christ should have lived so long ago
To find them here again!
That Christ should have swept the temple clean,
And they return to their booths obscene!

Ah, no! Not the little folk who pass!
Not the girl of the shop or mill;
Not the pallid clerk with narrow chest;
Not the keen fine soul of good will;
Under their garb of sacrifice
Their souls must be splendid in Christ's eyes.

But the rich folk! The white folk! The folk with
many rings!
The folk with silly manners;
The folk with Many Things;
Is there no way to get them sane;

To make them lean again;
To show them all the sweat and pain,
The thoughts of common men?

Nay, I will go from here!
For patienter men than I
The task to brook the fatted leer,
The whetted tusk at the sty;
For I know quiet mountain places
And the good smile of lean brown faces.

O the fine land where men are men,
And women the mothers of men;
Who that once has known you
But will go back again?
To the quiet fields and the quiet ways
And the great hills that pierce the days.

THERE WAS A KING IN BABYLON

THERE was a king in Babylon,
Babylon, Babylon:
The mightiest king the sun shone on;
(So they said in Babylon.)

High as clouds red-rose at eve
Were the towers he loved the best;
Country folk could but believe
They were portents in the west.
“Splendid! Let them keep right on!”
Said the King of Babylon.

Terraces he laid him out;
Emerald lakes beneath the glare;
It was pleasant in the drought
Just to watch the crowd from there.

“Thus we realize the sun,”
Smiled the King of Babylon.

When the purple evening fell,
Myriad fountains wet the musk,
And a silver-clappered bell
Stirred with resonance the dusk.
“Folk must wake till I am done,”
Said the King of Babylon.

Orange lanterns rimmed with pearls
Crescentwise across the court,
Lit a thousand dancing-girls; —
But the King, for his disport,
“None but I must look thereon,”
Quoth the King of Babylon.

When the King grew ill in thought, —
Even kings are dull at times, —

He would have his captives brought,
Scores of kings from other climes.
“Make them crawl their four legs on!
Animals!” roared Babylon.

So the priests, — and they should know, —
All the minstrels, all the seers,
Told the King his name would go
Echoing down the endless years.
“Yea. Why else have I this done?”
Asked the King of Babylon.

Purple night on purple nights,
Stealing in on gossamer wing —
Came a flickering of the lights
And a crying from the King!
Strange winds whisper, mock, and run;
The arras stirs near Babylon.

Then a thousand guards came hurrying;
Then a thousand wives came crying;

Hordes of priests and eunuchs scurrying;
“Haste! O, haste, the King is dying!”
“Aye! Make haste, for I am done.
Fools! Ye lied!” said Babylon.

“While I lay here, halfway dreaming; —
There was music somewhere near; —
Came a dreadful pale light gleaming,
And a voice in my ear:
‘Thou wilt die ere day’s begun:
Think on death, O, Bablyon!

“Listen, ere the spirit goeth;
All thy cities will be ashes,
All the wisdom that thou knowest
Will be merely as the trash is;
No man underneath the sun
Will heed thy name, O Babylon!

“But — and this will surely kill thee —
In the meanest court of town,

There is one whose work will thrill the
Ages, not thy poor renown;
He, the potter Admirhon,
Will long survive thee, Babylon.

“Aye, for all the cunning faces
That he graves upon his bowl,
And the words his finger traces,
They are written with his soul;
Love, not wealth, O Babylon,
Keeps this sad world moving on.’”

Hark! A wind stirred near the bed,
And the orange lights grew low,
The great king gasped with lifted head,
There came a silence — and then slow,
A murmurous sound as, with the sun,
The potters sang in Babylon.

There was a king in Babylon,

Babylon, Babylon.

The mightiest king the sun shone on;

(So they said in Babylon.)

FIFTY YEARS SPENT

FIFTY years spent before I found me,
Wind on my mouth and the taste of the rain,
Where the great hills circled and swept around me
And the torrents leapt to the mist-drenched plain;
Ah, it was long this coming of me,
Back to the hills and the sounding sea.

Ye who can go when so it tideth
To fallow fields when the Spring is new,
Finding the spirit that there abideth,
Taking fill of the sun and the dew;
Little ye know of the cross of the town
And the small pale folk who go up and down.

Fifty years spent before I found me
A bank knee-deep with climbing rose,

Saw, or had space to look around me,
Knew how the apple buds and blows;
And all the while that I thought me wise
I walked as one with blinded eyes.

Scarcely a lad who passes twenty
But finds him a girl to balm his heart;
Only I, who had work so plenty,
Bade this loving keep apart:
Once I saw a girl in a crowd,
But I hushed my heart when it cried out loud.

City courts in January,
City courts in wilted June,
Often ye will catch and carry
Echoes of some straying tune:
Ah, but underneath the feet
Echoes stifle in a street.

Fifty years spent, and what do they bring me?
Now I can buy the meadow and hill:

Where is the heart of the boy to sing thee?
Where is the life for thy living to fill?
And thirty years back in a city crowd
I passed a girl when my heart cried loud!

THE END

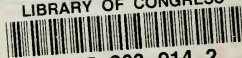
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